

as a united Nation can work together, face any peril, and succeed.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL  
CHARLES W. THOMAS

**HON. JIM McCRERY**

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 26, 2000*

Mr. McCRERY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to pay tribute to a fellow Louisianan, Major General Charles W. Thomas, who is retiring after more than 32 years of service to the Nation in the United States Army.

General Thomas served the past two years as the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Training Doctrine Command (TRADOC), responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of this major Army element and its 15 installations, 27 Army schools, and 67 thousand military and civilian personnel located throughout the United States. TRADOC's mission is to prepare the U.S. Army for war and is the architect of the future Army. In the fast paced world of change we have witnessed at a national and international level over the past three decades, General Thomas has been instrumental in steering the U.S. Army on a path to meet current and future threats to our national security. Equally important, he has contributed significantly to the readiness of the Army by ensuring the men and women in uniform were well trained and well equipped for their missions during peace and war. His leadership and mentoring played a major role in the development of an Army in which the citizens of our great nation can be justifiably proud.

Serving under such daunting responsibilities has been a pattern in General Thomas' military career, a career which began in October 1968 and saw him serve in the Military Intelligence Corps at such diverse locations as Turkey, Thailand, Germany, and in Saudi Arabia during Operation DESERT STORM. These tours of duty and a variety of other command and staff assignments have taken this alumnus of Northwestern State University in Louisiana with undergraduate and graduate degrees in Zoology across the seas and around the United States with duty in Georgia, Arizona, Hawaii, and Virginia, among other states. But his home has always been Natchitoches, Louisiana, where his parents, Dr. and Mrs. Charles and Sadie Thomas, still reside today.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize this respected Army leader. I wish General Thomas and his wife Sharon all the best, and am certain that Members of the House will join me in tribute to this outstanding American.

A VISION OF HINDU INDIA

**HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 26, 2000*

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, I noticed two recent articles that underline the religious tyranny in India. One was in the New York Times and the other was in the Washington Times. Together, they show that for minorities, the

promise of Indian secularism and religious freedom is a mirage.

The RSS, a militant Hindu nationalist organization, wants to ban foreign churches from India. It wants to reconvert everybody who converted from Hinduism to any other religion, such as Christianity or Islam. The RSS published a booklet encouraging people to file false criminal cases against Christians and members of other minority religions. They are moving ahead with plans to build a Hindu temple on the site of a very revered mosque. Is this how they practice secularism and religious tolerance in India?

The ruling BJP is under the umbrella of the RSS. In fact, Prime Minister Vajpayee just about a month ago told an audience that he will "always" be a part of the RSS. Shiv Sena, a militant coalition partner of the BJP, is also part of the RSS.

Since Christmas 1998, Christians have been subjected to church burnings, attacks on Christian schools and prayer halls, nuns being raped, priests being murdered, the burning murder of a missionary and his two little sons, and so many other atrocities that I have lost track of them. Two independent investigations show that 35 Sikhs were massacred in Chithi Singhpora while the President was visiting in March. Now these disturbing articles have come to light. How far will this pattern of religious hostility go on before we do something to stop it?

We should declare India a violator of religious rights. In light of that, we should cut U.S. aid to India. Why should the American taxpayer be forced to pay taxes to support a government that engages in such policies? We should also put ourselves on record in support of self-determination for Khalistan, Kashmir, Nagalim, and the other minority nations living under Indian rule. It is our responsibility to do what we can to support freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I submit the following New York Times article into the RECORD for the information of my colleagues and the American people.

A CAMP MEETING CELEBRATES THE VISION OF  
A HINDU INDIA

By Celia W. Dugger

AGRA, India, Oct. 15—Dust rose in derbies across the dun-colored parade ground here, swirling around the legs of almost 60,000 uniformed men and boys from more than 7,000 villages. Those foot soldiers in the quest for a Hindu nation stood in ruler-straight lines that stretched as far as the eye could see.

They had come to a three-day camp to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Rashtriya Swayamservak Sangh, or the National Volunteers Association. It is a powerful disciplined and, some believe, dangerously divisive organization that has given rise to a raft of affiliated groups, including the Bharatiya Janata party that now leads India's coalition government.

After an hour of toe touches, deep knee bends and push-ups, the volunteers sat cross-legged in the dirt and lay down their long bamboo staffs to listen raptly to their leader, K.S. Sudarshan. He inspired them with a vision of India as an ancient and tolerant Hindu nation, but warned that the country was threatened from within by Christian churches that he described as foreign dominated and funded.

Although Christians have lived in India for 2,000 years and make up only 2 percent of its one billion people, he raised the specter of Christian conversions diminishing the domi-

nance of Hindus and leading to secessionist movements. He criticized Christian and Muslim Indians who have refused, in his eyes, to embrace their Hindu heritage. He called on Christians to sever links with "foreign" churches and set up a Church of India. And he condemned Roman Catholic missionaries who believe that only their path leads to salvation.

"How can we allow such people to work here?" he asked from his podium high above the ground. A larger-than-life likeness of the Hindu god Krishna loomed behind him.

Fifty-three years after India gained its independence from British rule, Mr. Sudarshan's movement is still agitating for a redefinition of the nation's founding secular values. They were enunciated in the 1950 Constitution, which guarantees "the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion." And they were ardently defended by India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who believed that religious minorities could retain their identities and still be loyal Indians.

In contrast, the Hindu nationalist ideology defines India as a Hindu nation whose people share a common geography, culture and ancestry. In this view, Muslims and Christians were converted from Hinduism and need to be reintegrated into the Hindu mainstream—a theme first sounded in the 1920's and articulated by Mr. Sudarshan today.

After the closing ceremony, thousands of volunteers, all dressed in paramilitary-style khaki shorts, white shirts and black caps, rushed from their rigid grid on the field toward the dignitaries sitting on red velvet couches in the blazing sun. A group of them surrounded Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani, who started in the R.S.S., moved to the Bharatiya Janata party, and is now believed to be in line to inherit the mantle of leadership from Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who joined the R.S.S. back in the 1940's.

As orders blared from a tower of loudspeakers, Mr. Advani joined the rows of men in making the movement's salute (hand held stiffly across the chest, palm down) on the count of one, lowering his head on two and dropping his arm on three.

His presence here was another tantalizing clue in one of the country's favorite parlor games: Are the R.S.S. and the B.J.P.—the political party that is part of the Sangh Parivar, or R.S.S. family—hand in glove or at each other's throats?

The answer seems to be a little of both. There is a natural tension between them, Mr. Sudarshan's movement, which is striving to build a Hindu nation from the grass roots up, is purist in its ideology. The ruling party, which is striving for political power, has set aside many of its Hindu nationalist planks to win the support of regional parties with secular outlooks. It is no longer pushing for the construction of a Hindu temple on the site of a demolished 16th-century mosque in Ayodhya, for example.

But the movement and the governing party also need each other. The party relies on the movement's vast network of committed volunteers at election time. And the movement enjoys a measure of political influence because of its close ties to the party.

"The relationship is a bit like that between the Christian Coalition and the Republican Party," said Ashutosh Varshney, a political scientist at Notre Dame and an expert on India.

More than half a million boys and men attend the daily meetings of the R.S.S. in 45,000 local branches all over India. The group's appeal is part Boy Scouts, part crusaders. Many become volunteers for the daily physical exercise, sports and camaraderie, but were later fired by the association's idea of nationhood.